

Coin redesigning faces committee hurdles

By Roger Boye

Legislation calling for new designs on circulating coins has picked up still more support after an April 22 hearing before a U.S. Senate committee.

As of early May, nearly two-thirds of the 100 U.S. senators and almost 100 of 435 House members were co-sponsoring the coin-design legislation. But despite widespread support, the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee has yet to approve the proposal, a committee spokesperson said.

Among other things, the legislation would force Uncle Sam to place new designs on the "tails sides" of the five basic coin types, cent through half dollar. The proposal also would suggest that Treasury officials use fresh presidential portraits on the "heads sides" of circulating coins.

Sen. Alan Cranston (D., Calif.) said at the April 22 hearing before the Senate banking committee that he wants lawmakers to amend the legislation so that only three of the redesigned coins carry the likeness of a real person, living or dead.

Cranston told the committee that placing images of presidents or other persons on coins could turn coin designs into a political battleground "with partisans struggling for this symbolic vindication of their heroes' political philosophies." Under Cranston's proposed amendment, the secretary of the Treasury would decide which two of the five presidents to remove from circulating coinage, according to Cranston's press secretary.

Cranston also wants the Treasury to pick designs that illustrate basic Constitutional concepts—such as freedom of the press or due process of law—for the "tails sides" of coins.

But U.S. Rep. Frank Annunzio (D., Ill.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and Coinage, told his col-

leagues in late March that the legislation is unneeded.

If—as expected—senators approve the coin-design bill, it most likely would be referred to Annunzio's House subcommittee for consideration. Annunzio's continued opposition could doom the legislation in the current session of Congress.